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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna, O.P., P.G.,** Missionary and Apostle of the Holy Name Society, by **Very Rev. V. F. O'Daniel, O.P., S.T.M.** The Holy Name Bureau, New York, 1917. Pp. xiv + 409.

This work is a labor of love, and as such bears on every page traces of that admiration and affection which the disciple rightly pays to the great master at whose feet he sat for years, and whose spirit he endeavors to imprison in these pages. Father Charles McKenna ranks very high among the zealous missionaries who toiled in the American Catholic Church during the decades immediately following the Civil War. The son of Irish farmers, injured to labor from his youth, compelled to emigrate (1848) at the tender age of thirteen for the reason which drove across the seas in those years the flower of Ireland's manhood and womanhood, his ideal was the holy priesthood, and he followed it with tenacity until he saw himself arrayed in the Dominican habit and empowered to work for the salvation of souls. Quite apropos does his biographer say (p. xiv): "To young men aspiring to the service of the altar, but deprived of the means of attaining their holy ambition, Father McKenna's life cannot fail to be an inspiration. To Christ's anointed it will ever be a model of every priestly virtue and an exemplar after which to pattern their own lives." For nearly fifty years this apostolic man preached east and west, in season and out of season, in cities and towns and hamlets, wherever duty called him, the great saving truths of the Catholic religion. His splendid physique, the stern regularity of his habits, and his iron will enabled him humanly to accomplish herculean tasks of endurance in the pulpit, the confessional, and the office. But to many it seemed as if only a special assistance of the Holy Spirit could sustain the man of God amid so many and so continuous demands upon his strength and his zeal. His zeal literally devoured his strength and drove him to ever renewed inroads upon it, until he sank exhausted in the unequal combat and gave up his pure and holy soul (1917) into the hands of his Maker in whose

service he had consumed every gift and opportunity that came his way.

Dr. O'Daniel follows chronologically the labors of Father McKenna in the routine life of the missionary—sermons, instructions, exhortations; confessions, visits to the sick and the stubborn; consultation and correspondence; writing of booklets and leaflets; travel and other hardships—every channel of religious activity in search of souls more or less astray from God. In all this there is, of course, a striking similarity to the labors of other missionaries less famous than the great Dominican, but similarly active in the service of the sinful and the lukewarm, the backslider and the apathetic. It was the Holy Name Society which brought into play the virtues of Father McKenna as a spiritual leader of men and an incomparable organizer of the fruits of laborious weeks of grinding toil in the pulpit and the confessional. It is true that he labored incessantly and successfully for the Holy Rosary Confraternities, but his inclination and his sympathy led him to interest himself profoundly in the spiritual welfare of men. For them he had a charm and a force all his own. He knew the way to their hearts with unerring accuracy. Every mission increased his clientele of men who thenceforth lay in wait for him whenever his duties brought him again within their reach. Few priests in the United States had a larger circle of male penitents, to whom the good priest's occasional visits were like the oil of gladness and the balm of comfort.

In the Holy Name Society, of ancient origin, but previously little known in the United States, he found an instrument of extraordinary value for arousing the faith of vast congregations of men and moving them to an ardent love of the Crucified One and a tender reverence for His honor and glory. Its ranks have grown from year to year until it now represents many hundreds of thousands of devoted Catholic men committed to clean and wholesome lives before God, and potentially the best material of good citizenship. Our great cities have witnessed of recent years immense parades of the members of this association, and few public events have brought home so forcibly the development of Catholic life and temper amid populations once suspicious or hostile, now respectful and often sympathetic. In this work Father McKenna was simply tireless and rose often to the greatest heights of elo-

quence and to equally great levels of devotion and sacrifice. He recalls the figure of St. Bernardine of Sienna, with whom he has much in common, once the quest of souls is accepted as a norm of comparison.

Perhaps the best work of Father McKenna was not in the pulpit and the confessional, dear as they were to him, but in his own daily life as it fell under the observation of clergy and people. Dr. O'Daniel, summing up his qualities (p. 315) as a model priest and missionary, says rightly: "How the great missionary could touch the souls of all may be judged from the fact that pastors and the parochial clergy often found themselves almost unconsciously making the mission which they had engaged Father McKenna to give to their parishioners, convinced that they could not make a better retreat than by following the spiritual exercises he was giving their people. . . . Young priests in particular, for whom he had a special love and in whom he took a keen interest, profited by his example. Many of our most representative clergymen of today frankly confess that they owe their lofty ideals of the priesthood to contact with Father McKenna in the early days of their ministry." This humble priest, surely one of the holiest missionaries of modern times, had the secret of goodness and mercy, and gladly made it known to all men. Herein lay the source of his influence, that has by no means melted into the general void, but is yet active. He denounced sin in words of flame and was a moral portraitist of supreme skill and accuracy. But he loved every sinner with a Christian-like love, and in that love he entered the heart of every sinner and took possession of it in the name of Jesus. Of Father McKenna might well be written, as of the God-Man, *Pertransiit benefaciendo*; he shed charity and peace as an aroma. Whithersoever his calling took him he was always "vir bonus et rectus timens Dominum," and, like the Good Samaritan, rejoiced greatly to bind up the wounds of his weaker brethren and to provide for them every spiritual comfort. This world is immeasurably better for his apostolic life, and his white robe has surely added to the company of the elect a new radiance.

✱ THOMAS J. SHAHAN.